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(FULBRIGHT)

Sen J. William Fulbright declared today that "the prestige and influence of our country on the affairs of nations has reached a new low" in the wake of the U-2 spy plane fiasco.

And, the Arkansas Democrat said, "We have not yet seen the last of the results of the bumbling and fumbling of the United States government during the first two weeks of May, 1960."

Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said in a speech prepared for Senate delivery that "the gravest mistake was made when the President assumed responsibility for the U-2 flight."

Then, he added, "After the truth became known, the State Department and the White House assumed a self righteous attitude which further complicated our situation in Paris."

Fulbright set forth his own views formally presenting to the Senate the Foreign Relations Committee's majority report on its inquiry into the U-2 flight and the subsequent Paris summit collapse. The report was made public Saturday night.

The Arkansas Democrat reserved his strongest criticisms for President Eisenhower's taking responsibility for the ill-fated May 1 flight and for the "lack of direction" which marked U.S. handling of the affair.

"If Chiefs of State begin the practice of personally admitting the violation of each other's sovereignty, the orderly conduct of international affairs will quickly become impossible -- as, indeed, it did become in Paris last month," he asserted.

As for the handling of the incident, Fulbright said "What is lacking is not so much coordination as direction. It is not the machinery which is at fault so much as the people who operate it.

"Elaborate arrangements for coordination are really nothing more than a poor substitute for a firm hand directing affairs. It is the difference between making a hurried phone call to Gettysburg for approval of a coordinated position and receiving clear instructions based upon reflective consideration from the White House."

Testimony during the committee's hearings showed that Eisenhower personally sat in on only one of the top-level meetings on handling of the U-2 incident and approved one major decision by telephone from Gettysburg, where he was weekendng.

Fulbright also noted with alarm reports that many persons in the administration favor resuming the U-2 flights over Russia. "Short of the madness of preventive war, I can think of nothing more dangerous than to resume overflights of the Soviet Union," he declared.